
***Catalyzing the Influence of Sanctuary Advisory Councils -
How Local Actions Can Have Regional, National and Global Effects
Alpena, Michigan – May 6, 2009***

System of Special Places

The National Marine Sanctuary System is a network of 14 marine protected areas encompassing more than 150,000 square miles of ocean and Great Lakes waters across the United States. Throughout this network, dedicated program staff work with our many partners to develop and implement resource protection, research, education and maritime heritage programs designed to protect their unique natural and cultural resources. Each site is a special place that has value and significance nationally and for that local community. But the value of the system and its programs are worth far more than the sum of its parts. These special places can help America resolve many of the critical issues of our time – sustainable economies, energy independence, climate change and adaptation, barriers between cultures that prevent collective solutions, national security, and others. Sanctuary advisory councils play a crucial role in making this happen.

Councils Integral to Catalyze Communities

The thirteen sanctuary advisory councils, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Coral Reef Ecosystem Reserve Advisory Council, and the Olympic Coast Intergovernmental Policy Council (collectively referred to as “councils”) have been instrumental in helping NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) mature into the federal government’s premier marine protected area program. Councils have allowed NOAA to effectively engage local communities in sanctuary management and enhance environmental stewardship.

The ONMS is proposing to build upon and catalyze the energy of this site-level community engagement and participation to larger scales and purposes. Based upon the advisory councils responses to the letter from Dan Basta on July 25, we want to encourage sanctuary advisory councils to work more closely with their local communities and demonstrate how they can address some of the critical problems facing our marine environment and coastal communities and in the process have regional, national and global influence.

The ONMS is not proposing to create a new “National Advisory Council.” Instead, we intend to capitalize on site-specific issues and tap into established community networks and individual connections currently operating at the site level, and apply it, appropriately, to specific issues, needs and opportunities at the regional, national or perhaps even global scale. The diverse expertise and perspectives of our existing council and working group members are an underutilized resource. We are looking for ways to efficiently and effectively catalyze these efforts beyond the boundaries of the sites, without detracting from the original purpose of each council to provide site-specific advice and recommendations.

Limitations – Facts of Life

ONMS fully recognizes the nature of sanctuary advisory councils, namely, that they are advisory in nature and composed of dedicated volunteers donating limited time and resources towards individual sanctuary goals and objectives. Many members have full-time jobs, family commitments, active careers, and other competing interests. There are also limited ONMS resources and staff dedicated to support the advisory councils.

Opportunity

Despite time and resource limitations, ONMS recognizes that individual council members have diverse and extensive knowledge and experience on many issues important to the sanctuary and the local community. Furthermore, each member has the ability to network with his or her extensive social and professional acquaintances. Collectively, this represents a wealth of knowledge and an intricate web of connections that can be put to purpose so that localized efforts influence and affect change on a larger scale. We are not asking the advisory councils to do more with less. We are asking the councils to maximize our limited resources and efforts to have the greatest impact possible.

Challenge

ONMS proposes to work with councils to:

- Think Globally
- Act Locally
- Have Regional, National or Global Affect

The ONMS is committed to help catalyze and facilitate local council engagement and stewardship at the community level to achieve regional, national and global results. The program is ready to help individual councils organize, empower, direct and educate their respective constituencies towards greater and locally meaningful purposes.

Session Objectives:

- To identify a few “touchstone” issues important to each local sanctuary community.
- To begin a dialogue with advisory councils chairs as to how our “special places” called sanctuaries and the attributes of our programs, staff and partners can help stimulate and facilitate local actions that are of value to a community and help them become more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.
- To empower advisory council chairs to work with their council members to identify and commit to specific actions that creates something of value to their community and helps them become more environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.

Questions for participants to think about before the workshop:

1. What are some “touchstone” issues important to your community? These are issues that generate substantial community discussion and debate, and often do not have a clear solution or path forward. They may or may not be directly related to the oceans (i.e., concerns about growing unemployment rate to downturn in the economy, or concern about pollution from upstream sources causing beaches to be closed and business to go elsewhere, etc.)
2. Given the keystone issues for your community, think about tangible roles and activities that individual advisory council members, working groups or the council as a whole could take to help address the issues. (i.e., organize a workshop/meeting with local community leaders and the public to discuss new ways to capitalize on the attributes of your sanctuary)
3. What mechanisms or tools can ONMS staff and/or councils develop or enhance to facilitate advisory council interactions with other user groups, organizations, and agencies in their local areas?
4. What can the ONMS staff and/or councils do to help those local interactions have positive regional, national, and global affect?

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Workshop Agenda

Wednesday, May 6

- 9:00 AM Introduction and Objectives
- 9:15 AM Working Group Break-Out Sessions
Participants Break into five pre-arranged groups and for each touchstone issue discuss and answer the questions presented. The group should select a note-taker and someone to report back to larger group.
- 10:00 AM Individual Groups Reports (10 min. each)
- 11:00 AM Discussion of similar touchsone issues/activities
- 11:45 AM Adjourn – drive back to Holiday Inn Hotel for field trip and lunch
- Dinner Dan Basta distributes workshop summary, which will be needed for Thursday's follow-up session.

Thursday, May 7

- 3:45 PM Session follow-up – recalibration